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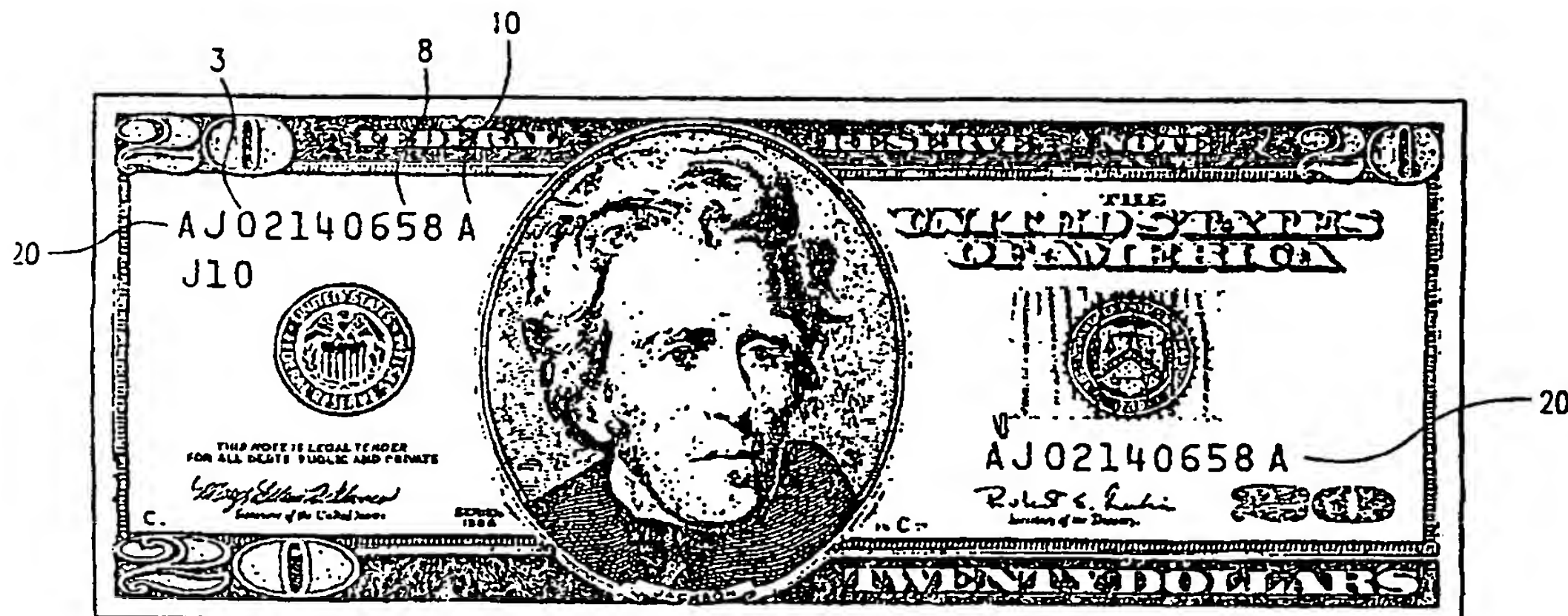
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(54) Title: PARTIAL OCR NOTE CONFIRMATION METHODS



(57) Abstract

Methods of identifying a note with a partial optical character recognition of one or more characters in the notes serial code (20). The method records the characters read (3, 8, 10) and associates each character read with its field position in the serial code (20). The method can use this information or combine the character and field information with positional information of the note within a stack in order to identify a note with a reasonable degree of statistical probability.

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BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

1. Technical Field

The present invention relates to methods for identifying a currency note using a partial read of the note's serial number or code. Individual numbers are identified to specific fields in the serial number in order to provide a statistically accurate identification of a note despite an inability to read the entire serial number.

2. Description of Related Art

Optical character recognition ("OCR") is a technology commonly used in the currency processing field for lifting the serial number or code from processed notes. OCR technology is used, for example, for identifying specific notes processed by a high speed currency processing machine, such as those machines manufactured and marketed by Currency Systems International of Irving, Texas, by lifting a note's serial code using a camera device and then recording the serial code to the note processed.

By way of example, a stack of currency can be fed into the high speed currency processing machine. As one of the functions of the machine, an OCR device reads the serial number or code of notes passed through the machine for processing. These serial numbers can be recorded and identified to specific notes as they are processed. One of the functions of the high speed currency processor may be to sort currency by denomination and stack fit notes for bundling. As the fit notes are stacked, the data processing capabilities of the currency processing machine track the location in the stack of each currency note by serial number. For example, for a processed stack or bundle of one hundred notes in twenty dollar denominations, data is accumulated that will indicate the specific serial number on each note in the stack or bundle and position of each note in the stack.

This information can be particularly useful in a number of potential applications. For example, if this bundle is later distributed by an automatic teller machine ("ATM"), the ATM can identify the specific notes distributed to a specific account by recording the position of the notes in the stack as they are distributed. The ATM might record that the eighth note in the stack was distributed to a specific account holder on a specific day and time. If later that particular account holder contacts the bank to indicate that the account holder received a counterfeit note, the bank can confirm such claim by requesting that the account holder identify the serial number of the note in question. The bank will be able to tell which note was distributed to the account holder if it knows the position of the note in the bundle and the serial number recorded for the note at that position provided by the high speed currency processing machine. If the serial number provided by the account holder matches the serial number identified to the note distributed, then the bank has confirmed that a counterfeit note was in fact distributed to the account holder.

Another example of a potential application of OCR technology is to assist in the identity of missing notes. For example, a commercial institution might transfer bundles of notes to a central bank in groupings of one hundred notes per bundle. If the central bank determines that there are only ninety-nine notes in a bundle that should have contained one hundred, it is extremely useful to be able to identify the serial number of the ninety-nine notes that were received and compare that data with the serial numbers recorded by the commercial institution to the one hundred notes that it shipped. By identifying the serial number of the missing note, it may be possible to identify the location of the note in the bundle and determine if there had been a problem at some stage of note processing.

Another example of a potential use of OCR technology involves notes deposited from a till when the till depositor later claims that the depositee did not properly credit all the notes

deposited. If the till depositor can identify the serial numbers of each note deposited, the accounting problem might be more easily resolved.

While there are many potentially useful applications incorporating the ability of OCR devices to identify a note's serial number, unfortunately a consistently accurate read of the entire field of every note's serial number in a high speed currency processing environment is not feasible given present OCR technology. This difficulty increases with worn or unfit notes. Consequently, it is not uncommon for OCR devices to obtain only a partial read of a note's serial number. The fact that extremely worn or soiled notes will always need to be processed along with more fit notes makes it unlikely that any improvement in OCR technology will ever provide the capability of a one hundred percent accuracy rate in reading the entire field of every note processed. Presently, none of the above examples of useful applications of OCR technology can be reliably applied in light of the inability to read the entire serial code of every note processed.

Consequently, a need exists for a method that will accurately identify a note even though the note's entire serial number could not be obtained by OCR technology. This method should provide positive note identification or negative note discrimination even though only a portion of the OCR is successful. Such a method should be capable of identifying notes through a high level of statistical probability having read only two or more of the identifying fields and should be able to provide some level of discrimination when even only one field is read.

SUMMARY OF INVENTION

The invention involves methods for identifying a currency note when not all fields of the serial number or code of a note have been read. This is accomplished by recording the position of each field read along with the character identifier found in that field. The method can also
5 combine this information with the position of the note in a specific stack of currency to provide an additional data point.

By way of example, United States currency notes, such as the one illustrated in Figure 1, generally have serial numbers with ten fields. An OCR lift on a soiled or worn note might only identify one or two characters of the serial number accurately. However, because the field
10 position of each character read on the note can also be identified, the method can determine which fields have been read and then associate the character within each field to the field position. The method then uses this information in order to statistically identify a serial number of a note to the note processed. This information can also be combined with the position of the note in the currency stack. By knowing a small percentage of the characters associated with a specific serial
15 number, the respective field position of each character, and the position of the note in a stack, notes can be identified with a high statistical probability of accuracy. This method, therefore, greatly enhances the usefulness of OCR technology without the necessity of improving on the accuracy of OCR devices.

The above as well as additional features and advantages of the present invention will
20 become apparent in the following written detailed description.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

The novel features believed characteristic of the invention are set forth in the appended claims. The invention itself, however, as well as preferred mode of use, further objectives and advantages thereof, will be best understood by reference to the following detailed description of illustrative embodiments when read in conjunction with the accompanying drawings, wherein:

Figure 1 is an illustration of a note; and

Figures 2a and 2b are flow charts showing the steps of one of the methods disclosed.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION

Figure 1 illustrates a typical twenty dollar bill or note. Figure 1 shows identical serial codes 20 located in the upper left and lower right hand corners of the note. This code 20 can consist of combinations of number and/or letters. Also identified for illustrative purposes are the
5 third 3, eighth 8, and tenth 10 fields in the serial code 20.

Currency processing machines presently use one or more OCR devices in order to read one or both of the identical serial codes 20. Because of soiling on the note or damage to the note, it may not be possible for even the most accurate OCR devices to read the entire serial code for a specific note. For illustration of the method involved, it is assumed that the note shown in Figure
10 1 was soiled or damaged to the point that only the characters in the third 3, eighth 8, and tenth 10 fields of the serial code 20 can be read. In this instance the characters "0," "5," and "A," respectively. The information that these three characters provide in and of themselves is of limited value. It would be difficult to identify any note knowing only that the characters "0," "5," and "A" appeared somewhere in a ten field serial code.

15 An OCR device (in combination with sensors that identify the position of the note relative to the OCR device) is capable, however, of determining the field position of each character read, because the serial code is located in the same relative position on a note. Therefore, additional information can be provided along with the characters read. Using the note example illustrated in Figure 1, data can be recorded indicating that the number "0" was found in the third field 3 of
20 the serial code, that the number "5" was found in the eighth field 8 of the serial code, and that the letter "A" was found in the tenth field 10 of the serial code.

Assuming that the numbers zero through nine are available for each of the fields displaying numbers 3, 8, and that all twenty-six letters of the alphabet are available for the fields displaying

letter characters 10, only one in two thousand six hundred notes would have the number zero in the third field 3, the number five in the eighth field 8, and the letter "B" in the tenth field 10. Consequently, by knowing just three characters and their position in the serial code 20, a note can be positively identified to a full serial code string with a 99.96% accuracy rate. Conversely, in attempting to negatively discriminate between a known serial code and the example note in Figure 1, the probability of a note having the same three characters read in the same three field positions is less than .04%. Even when only two field positions are read, for example the eighth field 8 and the tenth field 10, the ability to negatively discriminate between a partial read serial code is still statistically significant. For example, if an account holder withdrew a note from an ATM and later called the bank to indicate that such note was a counterfeit, the account holder would have less than .4% chance of guessing at the accurate serial code when the bank knows that the number five and the letter "A" are found in the eighth 8 and tenth 10 fields, respectively.

One embodiment of the invention uses only the combination of characters read along with their respective field positions to assist in identifying or negatively discriminating notes. A second embodiment of the invention adds to this information the position of the note in question in a given currency bundle or stack. Again using the example note of Figure 1, it is assumed that the information has already been provided on the characters found in three field positions. During currency processing, it can also be recorded that the note identified to this partial read serial code has been placed, for example, as the eight note in a bundle of one hundred notes. Likewise, all of the notes in a particular stack are associated with either complete or partial serial code information obtained during processing and positional information in the stack. This process can be assimilated by a computer or the data processing functions of the currency processing machine.

The benefit of knowing the position of the note in the stack is again illustrated by the example involving the ATM. The ATM can typically identify and record the position of each note withdrawn and associate that note's position with each specific withdrawal. Further, the ATM can record the account information associated with such withdrawal. Consequently, if an account holder contacts the bank complaining that a counterfeit had been distributed from one of the bank's ATM, using applicants method the bank would be equipped with all the information required to determine if this claim is valid even though only a partial serial code read has been obtained on the note in question.

The bank first requests the account holder's account number and the date and location of the ATM withdrawal. Using this information, the bank can determine the position in the stack loaded in the ATM of the notes withdrawn by the account holder. A simple example involves an account holder that withdrew one single note which the bank identifies as the example note of Figure 1 and where this is the note recorded to the eighth position in a stack of one hundred notes loaded into the ATM. To confirm that the note is a counterfeit, the bank then requests that the account holder provide the serial number of the note. The statistical probability that any given note will have the same three characters identified to their respective three fields 3, 8, 10, as the note that was identified as being distributed by its location in the stack is one in two thousand six hundred, or less than a .04% chance.

The steps of the above method are further understood by reference to figures 2a and 2b. A bundle of unprocessed notes are fed into a processing device, such as a high speed currency processing machine. During the processing cycle, an OCR device reads the serial code of all identifiable characters on each note as it passes the device. Next, the position of each character read is associated with a known field position. This information is retained by a computer or

separate data processing function while the note is further processed. At the end of the processing cycle each note is stacked with other processed notes in a bundle. A record 50 is made of the position of each note in the bundle. All of the information obtained during the steps illustrated by Figure 2a is correlated for each of the individual notes processed.

5 Later, the note stack or bundle is fed 60 into an ATM. As each individual note is subsequently distributed, the ATM records 70 the position of the note from the stack as it is distributed. The ATM also associates 80 account information regarding the account holder to whom the note from a said position is distributed. By knowing this account information, the bank can use the positional information to identify 90 a partially read serial code to each individual note
10 distributed.

 The invention has applications beyond OCR lift and high speed currency processing issues. For example, OCR devices could be installed to record serial numbers on notes as they are being distributed from an ATM or other consumer currency distribution type machines. Identification of serial code information, even if it is only a partial read of the serial code, could then be
15 associated by the ATM machine with each individual withdrawal. Using the method described of recording not just the characters found by the partial read but also the characters' position in the serial code, a bank would be able to identify each note distributed to a reasonable degree of statistical probability even without knowing the position of the note in the bundle loaded into the ATM.

20 While the invention has been particularly shown and described with reference to a preferred embodiment, it will be understood by those skilled in the art that various changes in form and detail may be made therein without departing from the spirit and scope of the invention.

CLAIMS:

What is claimed is:

1. A method for identifying a note having a serial code, said method comprising the steps of:
 - (a) identifying at least one character of the note's serial code;
 - (b) identifying the field position of said at least one character read; and
 - (c) identifying the recorded field position and characters to the note.
2. The method of claim 1 further comprising:
 - (d) identifying the note to a position in a stack of notes.
3. The method of claim 1 wherein the serial code characters are identified using an optical character recognition device.
4. The method of claim 1 wherein the position identified in step (d) is correlated to account information when the note is distributed.
5. The method of claim 1 wherein the position identified in step (d) is correlated to account information when the note is deposited.

6. A method for correlating a partially read serial code to a note, comprising the steps of:
- (a) reading at least one character of a serial code;
 - (b) identifying the field position of at least one character read; and
 - (c) comparing the read character and identified field position with the serial code of a
- 5 note.

7. The method of claim 6 further comprising:
- (d) identifying the note by its position in a stack of notes.

8. The method of claim 7 further comprising:
- (e) identifying account data to the note when distributed from said stack.

9. The method of claim 7 further comprising:
- (e) identifying account data to the note when the stack is deposited.

10. A method for identifying notes distributed from an automated teller machine comprising the steps of:

- a) reading at least one character of a note's serial code
- b) identifying the field position in the serial code of the character read;
- c) recording the field position identified and character read; and
- d) correlating account data with the recorded field character and field position data.

11. The method of claim 10 wherein the reading of step (a) and identifying of step (b) occurs before the notes are installed in the automated teller machine.

12. The method of claim 11 wherein the correlating of step (d) further comprises identifying the note by its position in a stack of notes.

AMENDED CLAIMS

[received by the International Bureau on 20 October 2000 (20.10.00);
original claims 1, 4 –7 and 10 amended; new claims 13 and 14 added; remaining claims
unchanged (3 pages)]

1. A method for identifying a note having a serial code, said method comprising
the steps of:

- (a) reading at least one character of the note's serial code;
- (b) identifying the field position of said at least one character read; and
- 5 (c) responsive to a determination that at least one character of said serial
code cannot be read, identifying the note by using the at least one character read and
the field position of said at least one character read.

2. The method of claim 1 further comprising:

- (d) identifying the note to a position in a stack of notes.

3. The method of claim 1 wherein the serial code characters are identified using
an optical character recognition device.

4. The method of claim 2 wherein the position identified in step (d) is correlated
to account information when the note is distributed.

5. The method of claim 2 wherein the position identified in step (d) is correlated
to account information when the note is deposited.

6. A method for determining the correlation of a partially read serial code to a complete serial code, comprising the steps of:

- (a) reading at least one character of a serial code;
- (b) identifying the field position of said at least one character read; and
- 5 (c) responsive to a determination that at least one character of said serial code cannot be read, comparing said at least one character read and said field position with said complete serial code.

7. The method of claim 6 further comprising:

- (d) comparing a position of a note in a stack of notes to a recorded position associated with said complete serial code wherein said partially read serial code and said complete serial code do not correlate if said position and said recorded position are not equal.

8. The method of claim 7 further comprising:

- (a) identifying account data to the note when distributed from said stack.

9. The method of claim 7 further comprising:

- (e) identifying account data to the note when the stack is deposited.

10. A method for identifying notes distributed from an automated teller machine comprising the steps of:

- a) reading at least one character of a note's serial code;
- b) identifying a field position in the serial code of the at least one
5 character;
- c) recording the field position and the character;
- d) correlating account data with the recorded character and field position data; and
- e) comparing a complete serial code to said recorded character and field
10 position data to determine if there is a match, wherein a match may be determined even though at least one character of said serial code cannot be read.

11. The method of claim 10 wherein the reading of step (a) and identifying of step (b) occurs before the notes are installed in the automated teller machine.

12. The method of claim 11 wherein the correlating of step (d) further comprises identifying the note by its position in a stack of notes.

13. The method of claim 1 wherein the note is identified in step (c) by eliminating all serial codes not having said at least one character located in said field position.

14. The method of claim 6 wherein if said complete serial code contains said at least one character in said field position, then said partially read serial code correlates with said complete serial code.

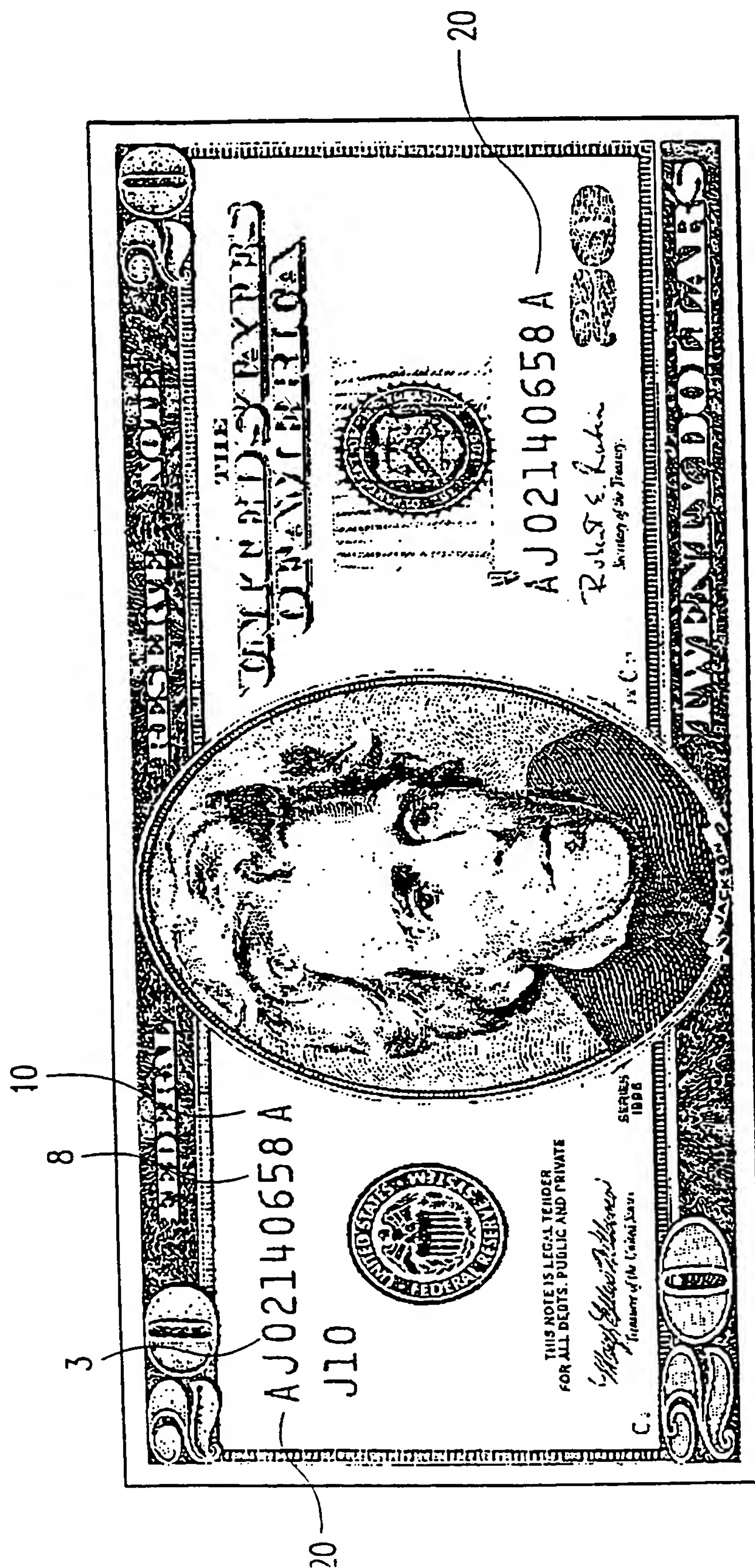


FIG. 1

CCSI1.00037
2 of 3

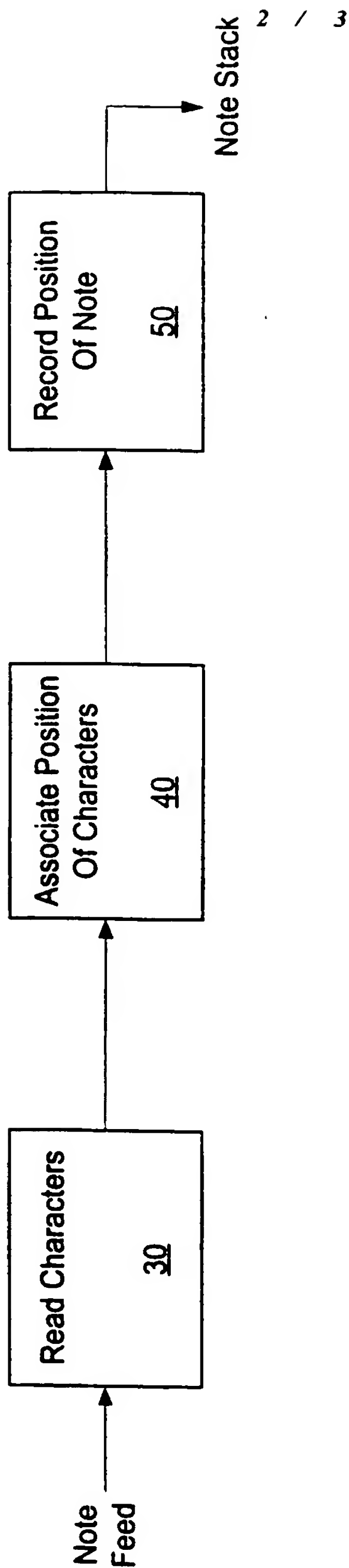


Fig. 2a

CCSI1.00037
3 of 3

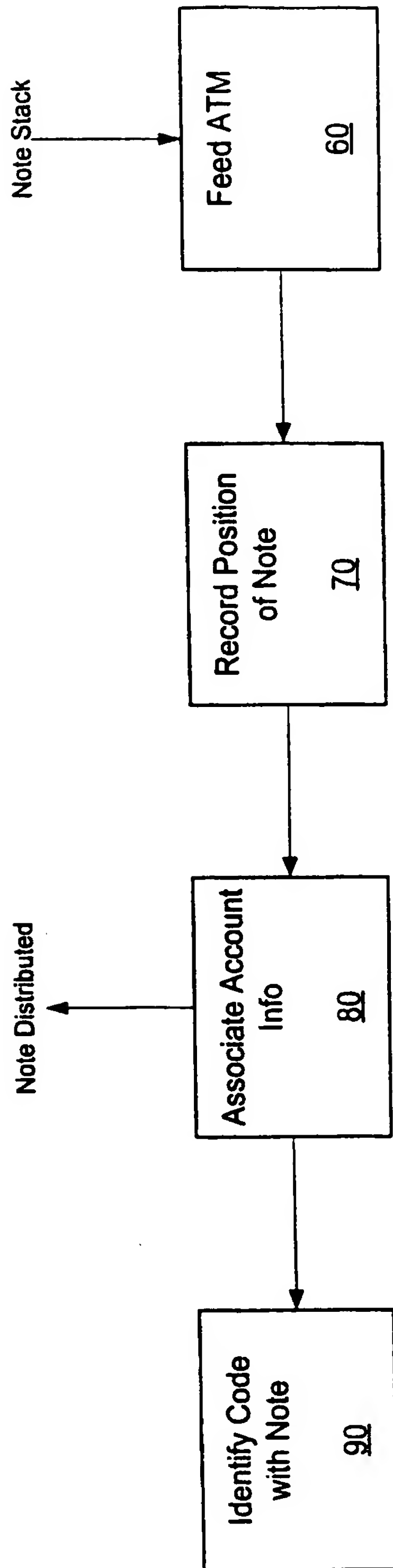


Fig. 2b

INTERNATIONAL SEARCH REPORT

International application No.

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A. CLASSIFICATION OF SUBJECT MATTER

IPC(7) : G06K 9/00

US CL : 382/135

According to International Patent Classification (IPC) or to both national classification and IPC

B. FIELDS SEARCHED

Minimum documentation searched (classification system followed by classification symbols)

U.S. : 382/135, 140; 209/534; 235/379; 705/43; 902/11, 12, 14, 17

Documentation searched other than minimum documentation to the extent that such documents are included in the fields searched

Electronic data base consulted during the international search (name of data base and, where practicable, search terms used)

EAST and IEEE Online database

search terms: currency, money, serial number, optical character recognition, OCR

C. DOCUMENTS CONSIDERED TO BE RELEVANT

Category*	Citation of document, with indication, where appropriate, of the relevant passages	Relevant to claim No.
X ---- Y	US 5,615,280 A (IZAWA et al.) 25 March 1997, col. 4, lines 3-11, 15-20, col. 8, lines 0-35, col. 7, lines 55-60, col. 8, lines 20-37	1-3, 6, 7 ----- 4, 5, 8-12
Y,P	US 5,917,930 A (KAYANI et al.) 29 June 1999, col. 2, lines 13-17, col. 4, lines 38-40, col. 5, lines 45-50, col. 6, lines 10-23.	4, 5, 8, 9
Y	US 5,570,465 A (TSAKANIKAS) 29 October 1996, col. 3, lines 5-27, col. 4, lines 3-26, col. 7, lines 55-60, col. 8, lines 23-37, col. 11, lines, 20-25, col. 12, lines 5-28, col. 13, lines 39-47.	4, 5, 8-12



Further documents are listed in the continuation of Box C.



See patent family annex.

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